DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 305 CS 011 734

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TITLE Constructing Meaning in a Classroom Context.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Context; Discourse Analysis; English Instruction; Grade 9; High Schools; Prior Learning; Protocol Analysis; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Processes; Reading Research; Short Stories; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Meaningfulness; Text Processing (Reading)

ABSTRACT

Current theory posits that comprehension and meaning involve not only text but also what the reader brings to the text and the contextual elements of the reading. A study investigated how eight students in grade 9 read and created meaning from short story assignments in their English classrooms. Concurrent think-aloud protocols from four short story readings were the primary data source, and these were supplemented by classroom observations and three interviews. The teacher also participated in three interviews. Results indicated that students used their experiences with written texts, personal texts, and sociocultural texts to create meaning for assignments given in this classroom context. These texts formed the basis of the coding system and included some overlapping codes for those responses drawing upon several textualizations. Classroom influences in the form of intertextual substances and processes related to which texts readers selected and used in their short story readings. In addition to these classroom elements, individual reading styles also were represented in the protocols. Findings suggest that communities, whether classroom, social, or cultural, influence not only the construction of texts but also how those texts are used by members of these groups to create meaning. (Contains 16 references.) (RS)

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ED 371 305

CONSTRUCTING MEANING IN A CLASSROOM CONTEXT

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April, 1994

CS011734

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ABSTRACT

Current studies of reading and readers have focused on what has been called the "constructive" quality of text comprehension. This constructive theory posits that comprehension and meaning involve not only the text, but also what the reader brings to the text and the contextual elements of the reading. This study investigated how eight ninth-graders read and created meaning from short story assignments in their English classrooms. Concurrent think-aloud protocols from four short story readings were the primary data source, and these were supplemented by classroom observations and three interviews. The teacher also participated in three interviews.

The data suggested that students used their experiences with written texts, personal texts, and sociocultural texts to create meaning for assignments given in this classroom context. These texts formed the basis of the coding system and included some overlapping codes for those responses drawing upon several textualizations. Classroom influences in the form of intertextual substances and processes (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) related to which texts readers selected and used in their short story readings. In addition to these classroom elements, individual reading styles also were represented in the protocols.

The report concludes by discussing study's implications concerning classroom communities and the discourse patterns privileged there, the relationship between students and teachers and its impact on learning, and what readers can teach us about reading and creating meaning.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING IN A CLASSROOM CONTEXT

Current studies of reading and readers have focused much attention on what has been called the "constructive" quality of text comprehension. Drawing from a variety of comprehension paradigms involving story grammars and schema theory (Anderson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1975, 1980), sociocultural approaches (Vygotsky, 1986, Wertsch, 1991), and semiotics (Witte, 1992), researchers are exploring the varied ways readers construct meaning from text. These theorists argue that making meaning from text is a dynamic process involving the text itself and the experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds of the readers. The context in which the reader approaches the text also plays an important part in meaning construction. These contextual aspects, combined with the elements readers bring, influence the transactions they have with texts and the meanings they create (Rosenblatt, 1976, 1978; Wertsch, 1991).

In order to discuss contextual influences on meaning construction, one first has to consider the relationship between individuals and their communities. Vygotsky's (1986) concept of "internalization" provides a perspective on the ways in which mental functions are influenced by societal and cultural forces. Vygotsky believed that gestures, signs, and symbols which have meaning for individuals are historically rooted in social interactions. Only after the community has attached meaning to and has reinforced them, do individuals internalize or begin to use them as their own. And through the mediational tool of language we learn these meanings and mental processes. In other words, we learn the concepts, symbols, and even the thought patterns valued by our social and cultural communities.

Those interested in classroom learning are concerned with helping students become part of the academic community. Heath's (1993) research supports the idea that those students who do well often come from homes and communities which value thought processes similar to those expected and assessed in the classroom. Wertsch (1991) identified these processes and languages as "privileged" in the academic setting. On the other hand, those students who struggle often have not internalized the concepts, terminology, and discourse conventions common to classrooms (Heath, 1983; Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993).

Cazden's work (1988) emphasizes the importance of the classroom community and the discussion conventions found in this context, "Differences in how something is said, and even when, can be matters of only temporary adjustment, or they can seriously impair effective teaching and accurate evaluation. . . . it is essential to consider the classroom communication system as a problematic medium that cannot be ignored as transparent by anyone interested in teaching and learning" (p. 3). Researchers investigating classroom interactions and meaning construction have found that the activities and discussion in the classroom are often reflected in the ways students approach and make meanings from literary texts. Results from

Newell and Johnson's study (1993) of teacher-presented (IRE) and teacher-guided lessons suggested that students who participated in a teacher-guided (open-ended) assignment constructed meanings from text including a broader range of responses drawn on experiential and textual knowledge. In constrast, those students exposed to conventional discussion often only retold the story or reiterated the teacher's interpretation. Smagorinsky and Fly (1993) also found that teachers' approaches to whole group discussions of short stories were often mirrored by students in small groups.

The present study explored the meanings ninth grade students constructed while transacting with short stories in the context of their English classroom. Classroom observations and interviews provided information concerning the social and cultural characteristics of the class and its members. These observations also revealed the discourse patterns common to one teacher and her classrooms, those processes and languages "privileged" in the setting. In addition, concurrent and retrospective think-aloud protocols which students completed while reading their short story assignments suggested some of the processes and subjects individuals used while creating meaning. The relationship between the large group discussions and individual students' responses was one aspect of meaning construction which this study examined.

Since this investigation was exploratory, the data and the implications serve to illustrate the types of responses classes and individuals constructed when reading in the classroom context. Limitations in time, equipment and volunteer participants prevented conclusive results. Nevertheless, the study did yield data patterns which suggest the role of the classroom community in readers' interactions with texts.

Methods

Participants

Participants in the study were recruited from two ninth-grade English class sections from a public mid-high school (grades nine and ten only) in a midwestern suburban district of over 12,000 students. The classes were labeled "traditional" meaning they included students with a variety of academic skills. (The other level distinction was "honors" which included high ability students recommended by teachers.) The teacher and I had established a professional relationship, and she agreed to assist in the study. To recruit the students, I explained my interest in learning more about how ninth-graders construct meaning from text and demonstrated how a reading think-aloud is done. Eleven students (seven from one class and four from the other) volunteered, returned permission letters, and completed all think-aloud protocols and interviews. All received a $20 stipend to compensate them for the additional time spent outside class. From this group of eleven, data from eight participants were incorporated into the study. Three sets of data were eliminated from the analysis because the think-aloud protocols contained few or no responses.

Data Collection

Data collection involved the following procedures. First, I conducted preliminary observations in the classroom to help students become familiar with me and comfortable with being observed. These initial observations helped characterize the discussion techniques, activities, and classroom climate indicative of this classroom community and its teacher. After six days, I conducted introductory interviews and had students complete the first protocol ("The Stolen Party") while I was present to answer questions. I also interviewed the teacher after this first protocol story. The second, third, and fourth protocols ("The Scholarship Jacket," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "All Things Bright and Beautiful") involved the same procedure, but I was not present when they were produced. Students completed these protocols outside the classroom with tape recorders and directions which I provided. During class introductions and discussions of these stories, I continued my observations of the class. After the third protocol, interviews with each participant allowed me to ask these ninth graders about their initial reactions as indicated in the protocols and their subsequent reactions after hearing the class discussion. A teacher interview also dealt with the particular difficulties in teaching "The Cask of Amontillado," its role in the curriculum, and student reactions to it. Final interviews explored the teacher's and students' perceptions about literature, class discussion, and reading for English classes.

Analysis

In the present study, the think-aloud data were of primary concern with observational data and interview data complementing and informing the conclusions based upon the reading protocols. I first worked with the protocol transcriptions, initially reading all protocols on a particular story to discern patterns in the responses. Each think-aloud response was coded as a total unit, even if it contained elements of several coding categories. I then looked at the class discussion transcripts and observational notes which suggested points of conjunction between the students' responses to the text and their classroom activities. Interview data, particularly those questions focusing on classroom procedures, also informed this thread of the investigation.

After comparing the classroom discussions and the think-aloud responses, I came to realize that readers used stories to respond to these narratives. Some included personal stories to make meaning from the assigned text. Others commented on information drawn from their knowledge of narratives as a type of literature. And practically all readers included "stories" based in the culture of the communities they belonged to, from one reader's western black or white morality to another's middle class sense of fairness and justice. Readers brought all of these stories from beyond the classroom to help them construct meaning for their literature assignment. In addition, their responses showed that students often blended stories, overlapping knowledge of written texts, individuals, and society in unique ways to respond to these stories.

To accurately represent the stories and experiences found in the protocol responses, a broader definition of "text" is most appropriate. The scope of the responses encompassed "texts" which readers created based upon their experiences. They used these broad texts to create meaning from the narrative. This relationship between texts has been labeled intertextuality (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Witte, 1992) This broad scope of text and intertextuality can also be found in current academic dialogues about meaning construction. Witte (1992) discussed the relationship between current texts and past texts, commenting that all language utterances are part of a social network and connected to other utterances. And following the work of Bakhtin, Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) defined intertextuality as "the juxtaposition of different texts"(p. 305). They went on to explain that texts may be words, signs, pictures, or even social events.

> A text is the product of *textualizing*. People textualize experience and the world in which they live, making those phenomena part of a language system (broadly defined). The result of textualizing experience can be a set of words, signs, representations, etc. But it might be other forms and products not usually associated with texts: architecture, rock formations, the starts in the sky, the wind, the ocean, emotion -- these can all be texts, but their being texts depends on what people do. The stars in the sky are only a text if they have been made so, if they have been textualized. In brief, text is something done by people to experience (broadly defined). (p. 311)

This definition of texts best informed the protocol analysis. For in these protocols, students brought a variety of texts and juxtaposed, blended, or interconnected them to create meaning within the context of the classroom setting. It was this social milieu which influenced the texts students used and the responses they created during the think-aloud protocols.

The following codes represent single text responses and juxtaposed categories. Three general categories describe the basic text-base of a response. These include a) *Text-based Texts* - references to previous written texts, movies, TV, as well as rereadings, restatements and questions about actions of the current text; b) *Personal Texts* - responses relating a similar or contrasting personal situation or experience or reactions which demonstrated an emotional response or empathy with a character; c) *Sociocultural Texts* - responses relating information gained from social or cultural interactions; and d) *Other* - responses discussing the protocol process itself.

Some responses were the result of readers incorporating many elements of their lives to construct meaning from the text. These multi-faceted responses defied classification with a single category but had the characteristics of two or even three categories. Common juxtaposed texts included a) *Personal Texts* and *Sociocultural Texts* - comments with cultural generalizations and personal experiences; b) *Sociocultural Texts* and *Text-based texts* - generalizations and specific instances, but the specifications

were based in the reader's knowledge of the characters and their situation, for example, inferences about the characters and their motivations which were grounded in current or previous text-experiences with characters and experiences beyond the written text concerning how people behave in similar situations; and c) *Text-based Texts* and *Personal Texts* - reactions where readers placed themselves in the texts.

Following the coding of protocol transcripts, another rater coded 4 of the 32 transcripts. Inter-rater reliability on the coding system was 92% for the four transcripts involving 217 codes.

The interviews and classroom discussions were not coded in this manner since the primary data source was the think-aloud protocols. Nevertheless, these transcripts provided support and explanation for patterns, procedures, and perspectives found in the protocols.

Results

Textualizing Experiences

During their concurrent and retrospective protocols, readers used prior *text-based* experiences to create meaning for the short story under consideration. Readers used written text experiences involving vocabulary strategies and story grammars as well as references to visual texts such as television shows or movies. For example, in the middle of the fourth protocol from Herriot's "All Things Bright and Beautiful," Heather responded,

> **OK, now I'm watching TV, I see that this is the worst thing to do try to replace an animal with another animal after one has died. I mean, so many things happen, you know, people have like certain trademarks they know about their bird. Like maybe their bird will say like one certain thing or say it in a certain way. But there's no way that you can ever replace a bird or a pet.**

Responses incorporating *personal texts* were those in which the readers "read themselves into the story." Rosenblatt (1976) discussed this tendency toward identifying with the characters as one which allows adolescents to live through and experience emotions, people and events which may be beyond their physical scope. One common activity was that of calling forth and using parallel experiences. In these responses readers talked about similar personal events. For example, Lauren talked about her experiences with a parrot while reading about the budgie in Herriot's story: **"Oh, those are so cute. I remember going into the pet store and talking to the parrot. Funny, they kept talking back too."** A second way readers engaged in the story was to place themselves in the action, empathizing with the characters to such an extent that they responded to events in personal terms. Noelle and Cathleen engaged in this manner frequently, prefacing their comments with "If I were . . . " as in Cathleen's response to "The Scholarship Jacket:" **"If I were her, I don't know if I could ask my**

grandparents. If they were that poor and couldn't pay for it, I think I'd feel bad. It would mean a lot though, so I don't know. I'd hate to be in that situation." A final type of engagement was Craig's use of dramatic reading. Even though he didn't comment verbally on the story in terms of his own feelings, he did reveal his emotional tie to the story through his voice.

The third category of coded responses included those which related information from *social or cultural* transactions. These might be specific declarative information not stated in the texts or generalizations about human behaviors which readers inferred from past experiences. For example, several students stated morals to the stories implying culturally-influenced generalizations about how life should be. Lauren responded to "The Scholarship Jacket" by commenting,

> **The story's kind of good, but I think there's some truth to it too. There are a lot of people in the system today that will do anything just to suck up to their superiors and stuff. I just don't think that's right. I think if you've earned something you should get it. I mean, no excuses.**

Within the narratives themselves, readers used declarative knowledge from beyond the stories to make connections to experiences with which they were familiar. For instance, in "Cask of Amontillado" the description of Montressor's carnival outfit lead many people to recall court jesters and typical dress for clowns. Dusty recalled the concept of a "romantic death" and noted that the end of Poe's story did not meet this criteria. In all of these cases, social and cultural experiences shaped readers' responses to the short stories.

Dusty's use of the cultural concept of a romantic death illustrates one way that texts are juxtaposed thus making responses intertextual. In it, Dusty related the current text under consideration with a cultural textualization. But he also used an intertextuality between categories, incorporating not only prior cultural concepts but also text-based experiences (in this case, a movie) to evaluate the short story and create meaning from it.

> Dusty: He's [Poe] got, like I said, you know, everybody dies in his stories. I don't like people dying unless it's in a gunfight or something. Unless it's like a romantic type death. Like the Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid how when in Guatemala, they run out and get killed. But the way it really happened was Butch, Sundance pulled out his pistol and shot Butch in the forehead and then put it up to his chin and pulled the trigger and shot himself.
>
> Q: So you much preferred that kind of description as opposed to this one.
>
> Dusty: Yeah. I mean, a romantic death, that's kind of neat. But this one was . . .
>
> Q: This one wasn't romantic?

Dusty: No. this one was just "I'm going to kill you and that's all there is to it. And I ain't going to add no flair or nothing to it." I like originality.

Q: You didn't think walling a guy up in the thing was original?

Dusty: Aww, that's been done in, oh, I don't know, how many movies. I mean people have been buried alive. There's all sorts of true stories about people being buried alive so the thing's happened many times.

Q: So you felt like it wasn't an original ending then?

Dusty: No.

Q: And you liked the ending like Butch and Sundance. And you described that as a romantic death. Can you tell me why?

Dusty: Well, yeah, it's just kind of noble, you know, they pull out their pistols and rifles and then they cock 'em and then they "Ready? Yeah." and then they just start running out, shooting when they're running out. Well, that other dude in the Poe story, he was drunk. So he didn't do nothing. He'd just "Where's the Amontillado?" The idiot.

These types of responses which included experiences from more than one textual base illustrate how readers juxtaposed several text bases as they created meaning.

Creating Meaning in the Classroom

While these categories and blends of textualization highlight many interesting features about how these ninth-graders created meanings from the short stories, they must be considered in light of the classroom and the discourse privileged there. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) addressed the social aspects of intertextuality and commented that the implied rules of classroom discussion influence the texts selected and the meanings constructed. Evidence of this relationship between what was presented in class and the protocol responses existed.

Intertextual Substance. Students often used subjects from class discussions in their individual protocols. For example, as Ahmad read "The Cask of Amontillado," he built inferences about a drug deal, interpreting each new revelation in those terms. The catacombs and wine vaults became the drug den; the pipe (barrel of sherry) became "what they do drugs on," and Luchresi became a rival dealer trying to kill Amontillado. By the end, Ahmad summarized his reading saying, "So now, I think his friend killed Amontillado and they're going back to their hotel, their palazzo, wherever they do drugs." The text selections informing Ahmad's meaning construction were rooted in the preceding class discussion. This story was part of a curriculum designed for the school's observation of Red Ribbon Week, an anti-drug campaign. For the two days prior to this assignment, Ahmad and his classmates had learned the origins Red Ribbon Week commemorating the death of a DEA agent and had discussed facts about drug and alcohol abuse. Students also used other subjects from class discussions in their individual protocols. For example, during the introduction to the story "The Scholarship

Jacket" the conversation included reactions to social prejudices which many students included in their protocols. Noelle concluded,

> **The thoughts were that I was glad she got it because she deserved it because she made the grades and everything. And the only reason that the teachers weren't going to give it to her to begin with was cause she was a different color and they were prejudiced against her and that's not right. And then they worked it out so that she wouldn't have to do that, that she'll get the jacket anyway.**

These topics students used to construct meaning make up what Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) called "intertextual substance" which includes all texts appropriate for selection. These texts, determined by the cultural rules for the time and place of association establish which texts are suitable in what settings. In other words, readers interpreted the substance of the introductory discussions as appropriate for selection and use in their meaning construction.

Intertextual Processes. Intertextual substance is one factor influencing readers' responses. Another is "intertextual processes" (Egan-Robertson, 1993). Members of the community, in this case the English classroom, privilege these processes to establish coherence, sequence, and structure. Intertextual processes were at work in this classroom and traces of them could be found in the readers' protocols as well. One process was prediction. Beginning with the textbook's references to predictions in the introductory section (Beatty, 1993) and ingrained in every discussion by Ms. Williams' initial question and "class starter," predicting became an important part of the readers' response processes. For instance, with the story "The Stolen Party," the following quote was on the overhead when students came in.

> 1. Poor people should not mix with rich people because rich people think of the poor only as workers and not as friends.
>
> 2. Rich people don't mind having poor people in their homes as long as they are good workers and know their place.
>
> 3. There is no real difference between rich and poor what matters is what you can do and what kind of person you are."

The daily activity pattern had students writing a response to the prompt on the transparency. After responding, the class as a whole discussed the issues involved and then turned to the story.

> Ms. Williams: Let's think back to what I had on the overhead. And the title of our story is "The Stolen Party." Knowing what you know, what I had on the overhead and the title "The Stolen Party," what do you think the story is about?
>
> [lots of people talking at once.]
>
> Ms. Williams: Wait three, four people are talking. I can only hear one at a time.
>
> Jeff:: A poor person stole something from a rich person.

Ms. Williams: A poor person stole something from a rich person. Anything else? Anybody else have an idea? Knowing what I had on the overhead. Knowing the title "The Stolen Party." What Tom?

Tom: The poor person stole something from the rich person.

Kurt: I think I know.

Ms. Williams: What Kurt?

Kurt: The poor person goes to a party, and they have a blind spot for them, and they like to be with all the rich people.

Ms. Williams: OK, Did you hear what Kurt said? Good idea! Kurt, say it again. With out the sucker.

Kurt: The poor person goes to a rich person's party, and they have a blind spot for them, and some people are like that ,and they look over [inaudible]

The class discussion preceding each story in the study involved the same type of activity which students often incorporated into their reading protocols. These predictions came at the beginning and within the story itself.

It sounds like, this girl, she's not real rich, you know, and her friend, her mother's like the cleaning lady or something. So I don't see why they're saying she's so rich. (Heather)

A second intertextual process developed and privileged in these classroom communities was that of applying generalization and specifications during the discussions. In the story discussions and the readers' protocols, responses followed a pattern of generalizations about society followed by specific examples (or sometimes a reversal). Often Ms. Williams' opening activity provided the generalization, and students responded by giving specific, sometimes personal, examples of this generalization.

Ms. Williams: All right, I want you to look at the board at unit 2, "The Obstacles: Facing the Challenge." We're starting a brand new unit. We have a brand new theme. And these are the subunits: "In the Heroic Tradition" which we will do a little bit later in a couple of weeks. And subunit 2 is called "Small Victories" and subunit three is called "Tests of Endurance." What do you think "In the Heroic Tradition" what can that have to do with obstacles and facing the challenge? . . . What does a hero have to do?

Sam: Something

Vance: He has to face obstacles.

Ms. Williams: How do you get to be a hero?

Vance: You overcome obstacles.

Ms. Williams: You overcome obstacles to be a hero? Give me an example.

Sam: Like fire people.

Vance: Firemen.

Ms. Williams: Firemen. They can be heroes.

Kip: Policemen.

Ms. Williams: I had you guys write about people who were either your heroes or your role models. Did anybody . . .

Carl: My father.

Vance: My mommy and my daddy.

Kip: Superman.

Ms. Williams: Superman would be a hero. He overcomes, he leaps tall buildings. And "Small Victories" and "Tests of Endurance." Can have something to do with facing a challenge? Do you ever have just small victories?

Carl: Yeah, like making a hundred on a test.

Ms. Williams: Making a hundred on a test. Yeah, that's a small victory.

Carl: That could be a big victory.

This exchange illustrates the usual pattern of intertextuality in this classroom. As teacher, Ms. Williams often began with a general cultural topic related to the text-based story or unit at hand. Then students drew information from their own textualizations of experiences to supply the specific examples for the classroom discussion.

This generalization / specification pattern was evident in the reading protocols as students created meaning on their own. Heather's response at the end of "The Scholarship Jacket" utilized a generalization, a specific example from the story, and then another generalization.

To me, the story meant that some people will try to change, just to change things for you, you know, but you can't let them do it. I mean, especially, well, for example, that teacher, you know, he tried to get that other girl to win that jacket, but it wasn't really fair I don't think. And so, the story just meant to me that you should stand up for what you believe in and don't let anybody put you down no matter how high they are.

These intertextual processes and substances reflected in the classroom discussions and individual responses emphasized again the complexity of creating meaning from texts. The data suggested that many of the elements readers use come from textualizations of their experiences in the classroom. These classroom or community textualizations provided the framework these ninth-grade readers used to draw upon individual textualizations of text-based, personal and sociocultural experiences.

Discussion

The data from this study can inform current academic discussions about reading and creating meaning since it revealed additional information about the relationships which develop among communities, texts, and readers Focusing on these relationships can help teachers and researchers better meet the needs of diverse classroom populations and better understand that complex process called reading. Of course, one cannot generalize to whole

communities based on a study involving one teacher, her classrooms, and eight students. But the data these participants produced and the time I spent observing them in the classroom did point out important areas for future consideration and study. Future studies involving other readers and other contexts could contribute to current models of reading comprehension and meaning.

The data from this study suggest that communities, whether classroom, social, or cultural, influence not only the construction of texts but also how those texts are used by members of these groups to create meaning. Bakhtin (1981; cited in Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) theorized that social interactions are linguistic processes. As community members act and react to one another, they communicate through verbal and nonverbal means in language and symbol systems. For instance, in Ms. Williams' classes, turning on the overhead projector at the beginning of the hour communicated that class was beginning, and it was time for students to end their conversations. The members of this community understood this social action in this context. It is a language or text (in the broadest sense) deriving its particular meanings from the social context of this classroom.

Another tenet of Bakhtin was that the meaning of an action or event is a result of the interactions which come before and after it. Everything is connected; nothing exists in isolation. Bloome Egan-Robertson (1993) build on this tenet and posit that the connections members of the community make between interactions or texts are socially influenced. The textualizations and intertextual processes which these readers used to create meaning from the assigned narratives supports his idea.

Margaret Williams' students made meaning by connecting with texts which they knew, perhaps unconsciously, would be valued in this classroom. Personal experiences, social truths, and even current movies all became texts to relate to the short story assignment. Early class sessions established the pattern for students and they quickly internalized it. These classroom or community precedents for intertextual substances became part of their individual responses to short stories as they appropriated texts while reading.

Communicated too were the intertextual processes favored in this classroom setting. Students related predictions, generalizations, and specifications students from the whole class discussion to their individual reading responses. And while the methods used in this study do not enable statistical correlations, this trend is worthy of further investigation. If students been in another classroom or context, would these same processes be used? Or would different processes be favored? In this setting, Cathleen felt comfortable with these processes and explained the role context played in her reading of literature assignments.

Q: If you were going to give advice to future ninth-graders about how to do a good job reading for English, what would you say?

Cathleen: I think it depends a lot on the teacher. I participate in class and stuff like that. It helps you understand. And I think you get a better grade just because you know what's going on and stuff.

Q: You mentioned that it depends a lot on the teacher. Are there some teachers that different things work better?

Cathleen: Yeah. Like last year, the teacher that I had, we were in a big room so we had like two teachers and two classrooms. But, the teacher that I had was a real good teacher, real good. She discussed everything. And the teacher next to her, she stopped every sentence, and everything had a hidden meaning. And I don't like that at all. I think with the other teacher it was like there was only one meaning to the story. It's not like what you thought. And I don't like that.

Q: So to do a good job in that class, you might have to do things differently than you do in here?

Cathleen: You have to read it out of her perspective, not out of your own. And say "We'll what would Ms. T. think about this?"

Q: So how do you find out what the teacher's style is?

Cathleen: Well, if she stops at every sentence, you kind of know. If she like asks you like "What do you think?" and then you tell her and she goes like "That's wrong." Or she goes like "Well, that's not really it." so I think that that's it.

Q: So that gives you a hint that she's looking for --

Cathleen: One meaning.

Q: And then you know that a teacher is looking for several meanings when?

Cathleen: Pretty much when they say "Well, what do you think?" Or if they say well, there's no right or wrong answer.

Cathleen, with her nine years of experience with teachers and reading knew how to assess the situation. And she probably is not any different from other students in classrooms across the country. Those who are most successful are able to discern which discussion patterns are favored in various classes. As teachers we might consider what intertextual substances we approve and what processes we favor.

Many times the discourse patterns of our classrooms do not match our stated philosophies and beliefs about responding to literature due to state mandates, student characteristics or other constraints (Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, in press). Yet, the data from this study and others (e. g. Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993, 1994) suggest that students textualize and recall for future use the discourse patterns prominent in their classroom settings. Influenced by these intertextual patterns, readers often internalize classroom activities and discussions and bring those to the text as well as their personal and cultural experiences from beyond the classroom. As teachers, we must be aware of all these influences and the impact they might have on the meanings readers create.

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